



The United States Army Field Band

Educational Supplements

Band Directors' Edition

These materials are specific to *The Barber of Seville* and *The Overture to William Tell*, created with band students in mind. For a more general approach and for materials related to *American Salute*, please refer to the Middle School or High School Teachers' Edition.

GIOACCHINO ROSSINI (1792–1868)

Gioacchino Rossini was born into a family of musicians, in a small town in Northern Italy. His father, a butcher, also played the horn and ran the town band; his mother was a singer. Gioacchino first performed in public with his father's band—on the triangle! He also studied harpsichord, piano, horn, and voice. As a conservatory student, he later studied the cello.



Rossini achieved the most fame as a composer of operas. He was a lifelong devotee of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and set the same story as one of Mozart's greatest operas. Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* looks at the earlier life of the main character in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*.

The Barber of Seville remains legendary for the fiasco of its opening night in 1816. Just as audiences today sometimes display poor behavior, the audience that night heckled Rossini because they admired another composer more. One of the lead singers tripped and got a nosebleed, moments before singing; a guitar broke during a love song; and in the midst of the chaos, a cat wandered onstage! Rossini actually left the theatre early and went to sleep.

Rossini's last opera, in 1829, was *William Tell*. Following this, he focused primarily on sacred and instrumental music.

The United States Army Field Band, based in Washington, DC, provides free reference recordings and instructional videos to music educators nationwide, from the elementary to the collegiate level. For more information or to request these materials for your own school, please visit our website at:

www.armyfieldband.com

The Overture to William Tell

has become one of the most well-known in classical music, despite the rarity of the opera's performance. Dmitri Shostakovich "sampled" the overture in his *Symphony No. 15*. Here is a small selection of the other ways in which the *Overture* has been borrowed:

- Theme for the television series *The Lone Ranger*
- Commercials, including one for Ivory soap
- Cartoons, including *The Flintstones*, *Yankee Doodle Daffy* and the 1935 Mickey Mouse classic, *The Band Concert*
- Dramatic music for Stanley Kubrick's film *A Clockwork Orange*

The *Overture* can be divided into a four-part structure:

- Prelude
- "Storm," in which the instruments play tutti for the first time
- "Call to the dairy cows" (*Ranz des vaches*), featuring an English horn solo
- Finale

The Finale is the best-known of these; the trumpets lead its dramatic fanfare and are quickly joined by the rest of the brass.

In particular, the *Overture* has been borrowed for the dramatic and triumphant solo trumpets of the Finale. In *The Lone Ranger*, for example, the trumpet represents the hero of the day, a masked cowboy riding on a white horse.

In modern American movies, the composer John Williams has chosen the trumpet to represent the underdog hero in many popular films, from *Superman*, *Star Wars*, and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, to *Saving Private Ryan* and *Born on the Fourth of July*. Williams also used the trumpet fanfare for the most heroic of all human activities, the Olympic Games.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Can the students name any more television or movie themes that use a single instrument to represent a character? It could be the good guy or the bad guy!
2. When a student thinks of his or her instrument, what "personality" does it have? What pieces of music might use the instrument in that way?

Other tools used by composers to create programmatic music are dynamics, tempo, rhythm, musical forms, and instrumental combinations. Aaron Copland used open chords (major chords with much doubling on the octave and fifth) to recreate the open prairie and western lifestyle associated with America's heritage. His titles reinforce the images: *Rodeo*, *Billy the Kid*, and *Appalachian Spring*.

What musical elements in the theme songs of favorite movies and television shows make them appropriate to the show? (For example, the "alien" whistle in the theme of *The X-Files*.)



ROSSINI'S ORCHESTRA

To reinforce the comedic elements in the story of *The Barber of Seville*, Rossini used bright, brilliant tone colors. He favored use of the higher wind instruments for this effect, placing characteristic wind solos in all of his comedic operas, commenting on the dramatic action and underscoring the farcical nature of the plots.



PLAY THE OVERTURE TO THE BARBER OF SEVILLE.
What are some of the high instruments that students hear?



RHYTHMIC IDEAS ADD BRILLIANCE

Motifs or cells will unify an aria, duet, or other ensemble. They can recur later in a piece to recall a specific moment, and often pop up in overtures as a form of foreshadowing.

They most frequently are played by the violins, grabbing the listener's attention immediately.

Can students sing back or reproduce on their own instruments any of the motifs used in the *Overture*?

THE ROSSINI CRESCENDO

Rossini also used a characteristic crescendo in his writing:

- Quietly stated rhythmic motif, repeated many times
- Addition of instruments and voices during each repetition
- Increased dynamics every few bars

This crescendo created a sense of growing agitation and tension, exploding finally as the instruments and soloists compete for the attention of the audience. This effect is most successfully used in Rossini's first act finales, where, typically, confusion reigns and the characters all run offstage to figure out how to solve their various dilemmas--giving us a reason to return for the second act!

Where in the *Overture* does a Rossini crescendo occur? Listen again with the students until they can accurately point it out.

Which instruments play at the beginning, and which have appeared by the end?



COMPARING

THE OVERTURE TO THE BARBER OF SEVILLE TO THE RABBIT OF SEVILLE

Play the original again, followed by the cartoon *The Rabbit of Seville*.

This cartoon is widely available on VHS, DVD, and even on YouTube.

Lead the students in a discussion comparing the plot of the cartoon to that of the opera.

(Plot activities available in the MS and HS teachers' editions.)

MUSICAL PARODY

Provide students with definition:

Parody is a musical or literary composition imitating the style of some other work or of a writer or composer, but treating a serious subject in a nonsensical or humorous manner. (Webster's)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

How is *Rabbit of Seville* a parody of *The Barber of Seville*?

How does the cartoon's music differ from the original? (Additional guidance available in the MS and HS teachers' editions.)

What elements of Rossini's style further emphasize the comedic elements in the cartoon?

Often without realizing it, we go through life creating emotional associations through our sense. A certain taste reminds us of a place or an event. A particular scent revives memories of a beloved person. For many of us that grew up watching cartoons, specific associations arise with their music.

The Sorcerer's Apprentice, as used in Disney's *Fantasia*, often conjures thoughts of a mischievous mouse and an army of broomsticks. For fans of Bugs Bunny, *Barber of Seville* and Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries* also conjure immediate visions of a rascally rabbit and his inept adversary.

What other classical pieces have been used in cartoons, commercials, or in TV/movie soundtracks?





FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION AND INSPIRATION:



Play recordings or obtain appropriate transcriptions of the following pieces. As your students listen or play through them, work together to identify programmatic elements such as chord structure, rhythmic motifs, dynamics, or other tools used by the composer to strengthen the associations of the piece.

- Igor Stravinsky, *The Rite of Spring*
- Aaron Copland, *Rodeo* or *Appalachian Spring*
- Ludwig van Beethoven, *Symphony No. 3*
- Antonio Vivaldi, *The Four Seasons*
- Hector Berlioz, *Symphonie Fantastique*
- Richard Strauss, *An Alpine Symphony*
- Modest Mussorgsky, *Pictures at an Exhibition*
- Camille Saint-Saens, *The Carnival of the Animals*

Michael Tilson-Thomas has created two outstanding DVDs which may assist in your teaching of these works.

The Carnival of the Animals (narrated by Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck, and conducted by Tilson-Thomas)

Keeping Score (explores the Stravinsky, Copland, and Beethoven pieces in depth; available at www.keepingcore.com)

Our Mission

The Mission of The United States Army Field Band is to “carry into the grassroots of our country the story of our magnificent Army.” In performances across America and throughout the world, the men and women of this organization take great pride in reflecting the excellence of all our nation’s Soldiers.

Learn More

For further information about current vacancies, performance tours, concert sponsorship opportunities, and education outreach programs, visit our webpage at—www.armyfieldband.com



Your comments

about our program are greatly appreciated and may be sent by e-mail to—field.band@us.army.mil or to the following address—

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